



Tshepang Molale 

Department of Media  
Studies, University of the  
Witwatersrand   
Johannesburg,  
South Africa  
Email: Tshepang.molale@  
wits.ac.za  
(corresponding author)

Gofaone Motsamai 

Indigenous Language  
Media in Africa,  
North-West University   
Potchefstroom,  
South Africa  
Email:  
mogorosigofaone0@  
gmail.com

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# ON THE DECOLONIAL TURN: AFRICAN LANGUAGE RADIO AS A CONDUIT FOR SETSWANA INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE REVITALISATION ON MOTSWEDING FM'S KGOLO PROGRAMME

## ABSTRACT

Scholars from across the Global South recognise the enduring significance of radio as a site for the preservation, revitalisation, and promotion of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and culture. In recent years, there has been a growing corpus of knowledge that documents efforts by the media to promote IKS and indigenous languages. In South Africa, however, this effort is limited given that some indigenous language outlets dovetail towards advancing the colonial language hegemony by adopting, or code-switching with, English in their programming. This article explores how the Ka Setswana (i.e., in Setswana) segments on Kgolo (i.e., to grow), a programme on South Africa's indigenous language radio station Motsweding FM, contribute to the preservation of Setswana cultural knowledge and practices. Anchored in Govenden's (2023) media decolonial theory, this qualitative study analyses 50 purposively selected episodes archived on Motsweding FM's podcasts. The findings demonstrate that Ka Setswana operates not only as a cultural archive but as an epistemic intervention that challenges the coloniality of language, power, and knowledge. The programme revives Setswana values and highlights indigenous media's role in African cultural resurgence. The article argues that language-based broadcasting, when grounded in community memory and critical reflexivity, can advance epistemic justice and model decolonial futures.

**Keywords:** community radio, communication studies, indigenous language media, decolonial media studies, language revitalisation, culture, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Motsweding FM, SABC, SDG 10

## INTRODUCTION

The nexus between language, media, and cultural survival continues to attract scholarly interest, particularly in postcolonial contexts where indigenous languages have long been subordinated to colonial languages (Shin & Kubota, 2008; Bhatt, 2010; Motsaathebe, 2018). Colonisation in Africa was both territorial and epistemic, entrenching linguistic imperialism that elevated European languages while marginalising indigenous ones to informal, domestic roles (Arendt & Reershemius, 2024; Mathe & Motsaathebe, 2025a). The result is that African languages have suffered from institutional neglect, diminished prestige, and a systematic erosion of their relevance in formal education, governance, and mainstream media (wa Thiong'o, 1986). In post-apartheid South Africa, radio supports constitutional efforts to revitalise indigenous languages by engaging rural and urban communities in their mother tongues (Nkoala & Motsaathebe, 2023). This study engages with broader scholarly conversations on indigenous media from across the Global South where an array of research was conducted including in Latin America (Van Cott, 2010; Peruzzo, 2012), Southeast Asia (Malik & Pavarala, 2020) and Bangladesh where there were rural communication initiatives (Khan *et al.*, 2017). Southeast Asian scholars have documented the use of ethnic minority radio to support national cohesion while promoting local identities, particularly in Vietnam and Thailand (Youkongpun, 2017).

Despite these global parallels, indigenous language media in Africa remains under-theorised in terms of its decolonial potential. Much of the existing scholarship focuses on political economy (Mathe & Motsaathebe, 2025b), development communication (Adeyeye, Salawu & Adesina, 2024), and media convergence (Molale & Mpofo, 2023). The current study contributes to the growing call for alternative frameworks that centre indigenous epistemologies, pluriversal knowledge systems, and cultural sovereignty. In countries such as South Africa, India, Colombia and Bangladesh, radio serves as a vital tool for education, cultural mediation, and preserving identity (Bhuiyan, 2002; Salawu, 2018; Pavarala & Malik, 2021; Chiumbu & Motsaathebe, 2021; Rahman, 2023). Rooted in Govenden's (2023) media decolonial theory, the study undertakes a critical reflection on the coloniality of power, knowledge and being, which continues to pervade media landscapes in Africa. The text advocates using the media to highlight marginalised indigenous worldviews, showing how Ka Setswana fosters decoloniality by preserving oral traditions and communal knowledge as cultural archives.

## RESEARCH CONTEXT

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) operates 18 radio stations targeting specific linguistic communities. Motsweding FM, which broadcasts primarily in the indigenous Setswana language, caters for over four million listeners, many of whom reside in the North-West province, Gauteng, and some parts of the Northern Cape, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Free State provinces of South Africa (SABC, 2025).

The station's programming provides an important case study for the role of radio in the cultural life of indigenous communities. Within this study, special attention is given to the Ka Setswana segment (i.e., in Setswana) aired during the Kgolo (i.e., to

grow) programme. Broadcast every Friday morning at 10:00, the segment features dialogues between the host and a Setswana language expert, covering a range of traditional practices, beliefs and customs (SABC, 2025). Topics include a variety of social roles and practices in South Africa. While these roles and practices may also be present in other African cultures, the programme anchors them within a uniquely Setswana epistemological framework. The study is tasked with achieving the following research objectives:

- ◆ to explore how the Ka Setswana segment on Motsweding FM's Kgolo programme preserves and conveys Setswana Indigenous Knowledge Systems; and
- ◆ to analyse the role of Motsweding FM's programming of Ka Setswana in resisting cultural imperialism and advancing media decolonisation in postcolonial South Africa.

## INDIGENOUS/MINORITY LANGUAGES MEDIA: EMERGING RESEARCH TRENDS

Globally, Latin America provides some of the most robust models of indigenous media activism. Gumucio-Dagron (2001) and Peruzzo (2012) documented how community radio in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Colombia empowers the Aymara and Quechua communities by embedding local knowledge into programming. These stations operate autonomously, reflecting and prioritising authentic community values. Devajana (2024) states that community radio in India empowers marginalised groups, promoting inclusion and local language revitalisation. Similarly, Chima and Saikia (2023) explored how indigenous communities in Northeast India used radio to counter state-led homogenisation and to assert their cultural sovereignty.

Khan *et al.* (2017) argue that community radio in Bangladesh has the potential to balance development goals with cultural preservation. Their case study shows how rural stations integrate folk songs, proverbs and storytelling into programming, thereby safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

Southeast Asia offers instructive parallels. For example, Youkongpun (2017) indicated how ethnic minority radio in Vietnam plays a dual role: promoting national unity while maintaining cultural diversity. These radio stations provide educational content, cultural programming, and language instruction in Hmong, Khmer, and other minority tongues. Sasong (2024) documented similar initiatives in Thailand, where participatory broadcasting methodologies enabled indigenous peoples to document their oral histories and traditional practices.

In Africa, studies on indigenous language media have largely emphasised its role in democratisation, development, and community participation. Salawu (2006; 2015) contends that indigenous language radio serves not only as a channel for public information but also as a guardian of cultural memory and local epistemologies.

However, emerging research suggests that indigenous language media can subvert these power dynamics by enabling linguistic and cultural affirmation. Mpofo and Salawu (2018) established how minority Zimbabwean online communities use digital media to preserve languages, despite systemic marginalisation and colonial language dominance in the media and policy.

In South Africa, public broadcasting has a constitutional mandate to support linguistic diversity, yet the implementation remains uneven. Mathe and Motsaathebe (2025b) state that community radio in Zimbabwe and South Africa faces funding and infrastructure challenges, while Molale and Mpofo (2023) highlight digital access and literacy barriers. In another study, Molale and Mgogo (2024) explored how indigenous language community radio programmes on cultural music aid in promoting indigenous cultures. The study found low listenership for indigenous language programmes on two community radio stations broadcasting in the Setswana and IsiXhosa languages, indicating public apathy and highlighting the need for greater promotion across media platforms.

There is a dearth of research on how indigenous language radio deliberately promotes cultural education and the decolonial agenda within a media space dominated by colonial languages. Therefore, the current study argues that to fully grasp the role of indigenous radio in Africa, one must move beyond developmentalist paradigms and consider its decolonial functions.

## THEORETICAL LENS

### Decoloniality and media decolonial theory

The study is rooted within the decolonial theoretical perspective. Proponents of decoloniality, including Nyamnjoh (2019), Mano and Milton (2021), Henson (2021), Monteiro-Ferreira (2014), Karam and Mutsvairo (2021), and Asante and Hanchey (2021) call for the advancement of knowledge that challenges colonial ways of knowing and being, especially in media and communication studies, by developing Afrocentric theoretical and conceptual frameworks that reflect Afrocentric epistemologies. The media decolonial theory was proffered by Govenden (2023) as one of the answers to calls for the incorporation of Afrocentric experiences, epistemologies, and realities in the project of decolonising media and communication theory.

Govenden (2023) highlights that both Global North and Global South discourse view decolonisation as an ongoing process, not a fixed goal, requiring continuous scholarly efforts to develop diverse theories that reflect Africa's cultural complexity. Media decolonial theory is predicated by three lines of critique against coloniality, namely, "coloniality of power, coloniality of knowledge, and coloniality of being" (Govenden, 2023: 17). The theory proposes that decolonial media should disrupt colonial power structures, knowledge systems, and identities that marginalise and obscure the colonised subject. Thus, the decolonial role of the media should be to deliberately perform the following three functions (Govenden, 2023: 18), namely, to be more "...representative of the diversities and intersectionalities of the society it operates

within i.e. in its ownership; representation in institutions, content; and audiences”; to be “...based on Western centric ideals of democracy, but also strive to meet the citizen needs of the unique post-colonial society in which it operates, e.g., socio-economic, language”; and when it comes to representing the so-called “colonised subject”, the media “...should strive to make them visible and not represent them in a distorted manner”.

Considering the foregoing, it can be argued that indigenous language radio should challenge colonial racial hierarchies to promote language revitalisation and cultural preservation, disrupting Eurocentric broadcasting norms. Through this process, radio provides an alternative way of viewing the so-called colonised subject from the perspective of a post-colonial African epistemology. While Govenden’s (2023) theory is based on a uniquely South African experience and context, it may be a useful theoretical lens when applied in other contexts across the Global South. In fact, Govenden (2023) corroborates this when stating that the theory can “...be applied to other African countries...[as] a contribution to calls for the development of an African communications theory...” (Govenden, 2023:17, own emphasis in square brackets). Contrary to Western media’s portrayal of Africa as a single, homogenous entity, we argue that no single theory can fully capture its diverse cultures, histories, and identities. Our application of this theory, nonetheless, is an attempt to theoretically interpret the selected case study as a contribution to the existing body of knowledge that seeks to decolonise media and communication studies by decentring Western and Eurocentric colonial tropes and misrepresentations of Africa and her people.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach, ascribed to an interpretivist paradigm. This is key as we believe that meaning is constructed through language and cultural practices. Given that we seek to explore how Motsweding FM’s Ka Setswana (i.e., in Setswana) segments facilitate the preservation of Setswana indigenous knowledge and the revitalisation of the language, a qualitative content analysis method was employed. The content analysis focused on 50 purposively selected episodes of the Ka Setswana segment, which is aired weekly on Friday mornings as part of the station’s Kgolo (i.e., to grow) programme. The episodes were retrieved from the station’s publicly accessible digital podcast archive called Motsweding FM podcasts. The sampling criteria for the episodes were based on their cultural depth and focus on Setswana traditions, covering ceremonies, social roles, and rituals.

Transcriptions and translations preserved linguistic meaning while enabling detailed analysis. The analysis followed Braun and Clarke’s (2008) six-phase approach to thematic analysis, which involves familiarisation with the data, the generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. This approach was chosen for its flexibility and suitability in capturing both latent and manifest content within textual data. Both inductive and deductive coding strategies were employed.

Five themes were constructed, namely, linguistic resistance and reclamation; the preservation of cultural rituals; intergenerational knowledge transfer; the affirmation of Setswana as an epistemological system; and critique of postcolonial modernity and cultural alienation. Attention was also paid to the narrative structure of each episode, the dialogic interaction between the hosts and the guests, and the rhetorical strategies used to convey indigenous knowledge. Special focus was placed on metaphors, proverbs, and culturally specific terminologies that embody Setswana worldviews. These elements were critically analysed to understand how the programme constructs and communicates epistemologies that challenge dominant Western paradigms.

The authors have undergone ethics training and have carefully adhered to acceptable ethical standards for handling research data. The project adhered to ethical standards by accurately transcribing and translating the data, safeguarding sensitive information, and informing the SABC and Motswedding FM to ensure no harm to the station or its staff. Although ethical clearance was not required due to the public nature of the recordings and the absence of human subjects, the analysis was conducted with cultural sensitivity, respecting the integrity and intellectual property of Setswana knowledge bearers.

## FINDINGS

### Linguistic resistance and reclamation of Setswana

The first theme is the deliberate use of Setswana as a form of resistance against linguistic and epistemological coloniality. Language here is a political and cultural act. The programme, following Govenden's (2023) decolonial theory, reclaims Setswana for education, spirituality, love, and social life. For example, an episode that was aired on Valentine's Day in 2025 foregrounded this when the host asked whether the Setswana language could sufficiently express an intangible concept like love:

*Gompieno ke botsa potso ya Puo ya Setswana — e re buang. A e kgona go tlhalosa lorato? (Today I ask a question about the Setswana language – the one we speak. Can it explain love?)*

This rhetorical question invites the audience to reflect on the expressive capacity of their language. The show asserts that indigenous languages can express complex ideas, challenging English dominance. This affirmation is critical to Govenden's notion that decolonial media should represent colonised subjects on their own terms, rather than through the colonial language and logic.

Ngūgī wa Thiong'o's (1986) foundational text, *Decolonising the mind*, argues that language carries culture and identity while using foreign languages distorts worldviews. The programme's use of Setswana affirms its intellectual depth, countering marginalisation and aiding in indigenous language revitalisation, as Salawu (2015) highlights. In the absence of print materials, radio becomes the oral archive that keeps languages alive across generations. The Valentine's Day episode also used language to question assimilation and mimicry:

*Ke eng o sa bue puo ya gago ya Setswana gompieno jaana, mo letsatsing la baratani?* (Why aren't you speaking your own Setswana language today – on this Valentine's Day?)

By aligning a Western holiday like Valentine's Day with indigenous language use, the host juxtaposes imported culture against local epistemologies. Chiumbu and Radebe (2020) argue that colonial media must cover indigenous voices and subvert dominance; thus, reclaiming Setswana in love narratives becomes an oppositional act.

Govenden (2023) asserts that media decolonisation requires centring indigenous knowledge and language in everyday broadcasting. This is what Motswedding FM uses to express identity, emotion, politics, and spirituality. During the 9 May 2025 episode themed around Workers' Month, Setswana idioms were used to speak about labour, teamwork, and ethics. Examples are provided in the excerpts below:

*Letsema le epa le bona mong wa tshimo.* (A collective effort succeeds when the owner is present.)

*Mabogo dinku a thebana.* (Helping hands support one another.)

These idioms are more than decorative linguistic flourishes; they are repositories of knowledge – what Hountondji (1997) and Manyozo (2011) call epistemic memory. In using such phrases, the programme not only preserves cultural semantics but asserts the language as a vessel of moral, philosophical, and practical reasoning.

The broader implication is that radio, when produced in indigenous languages, becomes a site of decolonial praxis. In the programme, Motswedding FM is deliberate with its commitment to affirming the preservation of indigenous knowledge and cultural pride for its listeners. The broadcast also offers moral, educational, and cultural content in indigenous languages, challenging the belief that development requires colonial languages. For instance, an episode aired on 21 February 2025 celebrated International Mother Tongue Day by sharing the rich pre-colonial history and cultural tapestry of Setswana culture and its people dating as far back as the 1800s when German historian Hinrich Lichtenstein (1815: 288) journalled his encounters with the "Beetjuana tribe of Maatjaping in the River Kuruhman". Further, the show explored how Setswana was first written in the 1800s by European missionaries, anthropologists, and historians. It highlights early contributors like Lichtenstein, Salt, Campbell, Burchell, Moffat, Livingston and Brown, educating listeners on their role in documenting the language:

*Nna kene kere gompieno re lebelele histori ya go kwalwa ga puo yarona ya Setswana gore nnare gotswa ko kae... Ke tshwere bakwadi bale lesome-le-bosupa (seventeen). Mme ke tiile go ba tsaya ka bokokwane fela, gakelle goya goleele thata ka gonne ke lebeletse gore re na le metsetswana ya go bua kgang yarona gompieno jaana. Ke batla pele ga ke bua gompieno mogaetsho, ke go nopolele a tllileng a buiwa ke Rre J.W.P Mashike. Ntate Mashike ene a re a kwala a re bontsi jwa bakwadi bantlha ba thuta puo ya Setswana ga se beng-puo, ke bakotedi. Mme fa gontse yalo, seabe sa bona, ga se se se ka tlodisiwang matlho. Re a ba leboga, ke ba ntsamaisa bosigo, re ba leboga bosele...* (Today, I wanted us to look at the history of how our Setswana language was written – to understand where we come

from. I have selected 17 writers. But I will only engage with them briefly; I won't go too deep because I want us to have time to discuss our main topic today. Before I continue, my compatriot, I want to quote something that was once said by Mr J.W.P. Mashike. Mr Mashike, when writing, said that many of the early Setswana writers were not native speakers – they were compilers. However, despite that, their contribution is undeniable. We are grateful to them – they guided us through the night; we are deeply thankful.)

In the extract above, the interlocutor hails the role played by these non-native Setswana writers, who produced seminal works in the Setswana language focusing on morphology, syntax, semantics, and phonology. The show explores language evolution through lexicography, onomastics and sociolinguistics, helping listeners to trace their linguistic roots and to understand naming and interactional language practices. In fact, the Setswana language expert touches on a similar view in the programme:

*Ke matsapa aa seng kana ka sepe a ra Lebogang. Mme rea leboga jaang? Rea leboga ka simolola pele re raya bakwadi ba rona ba maloba ba reneng re re ke bakotedi ba puo, re ba raya re 're relebogela bokotedi bwa lona. Re lebogela gompieon yana, re kgona go kwala ka ntheng ya gore lo simolotse pele le kwala nyena, le fa lene le kwala le sa kwale sentle, gompieono rona re ntse mo fatshe fa, rea baakanya... (These are commendable efforts which we appreciate, and how do we show our appreciation? We do so by saying to these early non-native Setswana writers and speakers, 'We thank you because today, we are able to write and we do so because you first started producing Setswana texts and even if when you wrote there were some mistakes you made, today we are here fixing them...'.)*

The show educates listeners on Setswana history and culture, sometimes addressing controversial topics. For example, in an episode aired on 28 March 2025, it focused on the potential for ideological clashes between innate Setswana cultural beliefs versus Christian monotheism and democracy. In introducing the discussion, the language expert aptly uses rhetorical questions to appeal to the listeners to turn back to their Setswana cultural practices and to not use democracy as the reason they have stopped:

*A Bongaka jono jwa rona jo, temokerasi e re laetse gore re bo bitse boloi? A dingaka tse tsarona tse renang le tsone tse, a temokrasi ekile ya re raya ere re tswa mogo tsone, re seka radi dirisa? A dingaka tsarona tse renang le tsone, a temokrasi ekile ya re raya ere re dineye mokotla? Kgotsa kemang yoo orile re neye dingaka tsa rona mokotla. Re golosegile gompieono jaanong, remo temokrasing. Mongwe le mongwe o golosegile goya ko ngakeng ya gagwe. Le yona ngaka ka boyone, e golosegile go diragatsa mongaka jwa yona. (Did democracy dictate that we label our traditional healing practices as witchcraft? Did democracy say to us that we should disavow our traditional healers? Or that we should turn our backs on consulting our traditional healers? Or who was that person who said we should stop consulting our traditional healers/doctors? We are free today; we live in democracy. Each person is free to go and consult a traditional healer of their choice; even the traditional healers themselves are free to perform their traditional rituals and healing practices.)*

From the above excerpts, interlocutors use Setswana to challenge political systems and expose how democratic language can perpetuate colonial violence and dismiss African ontologies. The implication is clear: liberation without linguistic and cultural

freedom is incomplete. This aligns with Govenden's (2023) third principle, namely, that media must affirm colonised subjects as they are, not as colonial scripts dictate.

Media decolonial theory offers a useful framework to interpret the different Setswana linguistic acts. The first principle – representation – is fulfilled by allowing Setswana speakers to hear themselves in complex discourse. The second – responsiveness – is enacted as the show uses language to meet cultural needs. The third – affirmation – is seen in the refusal to translate or sanitise Setswana expressions, allowing them to exist in their full epistemic weight. Setswana radio unites generations, spaces and knowledge systems, resonating without relying on English mediation.

## Preservation of cultural protocols and indigenous rituals

The second major theme emphasizes affirming, reviving and contextualising cultural protocols and indigenous rituals. The data gathered from episodes aired on 4 April, 21 February, and 28 March 2025 demonstrate how Motsweding FM's Ka Setswana segment engages in epistemic disobedience through the valourisation of indigenous belief systems. Aligned with the second principle of Govenden's (2023) media decolonial theory, this theme affirms how the programme challenges colonial knowledge by restoring indigenous mourning, healing and sacred practices, affirming decolonial theory:

*A re santse re tshwere meila ya rona ya maloba, ka ntlha ya gore meila eno ke kotelo ya rona e re kotelang gore re se ka ra dira dilo tse di tswang mo tseleng. (We are still holding on to the traditions (meila) of our ancestors because these meila serve as boundaries that stop us from doing things that deviate from the right path.)*

The above quote from the episode that aired on 4 April 2025 speaks to the cultural significance of customs that function as societal regulators. The idea that *meila* (traditions) function as a *kotelo* (fence or boundary) directly reflects the Afrocentric moral order, as outlined by Nyamnjoh (2019), who asserts that African culture is not simply performative but deeply spiritual, designed to discipline community members into being accountable human beings. This aligns with Govenden's (2023: 18) second principle of media decolonial theory: "Media should strive to meet the socio-cultural needs of the post-colonial society it operates in, especially in terms of language and culture".

Further, the 21 February 2025 episode sheds light on traditional medicinal healing, such as *mogaga* (river lily leaves) and *motshotelo* (cow dung), detailing not only their use but also the philosophy underpinning them:

*Moswela kgotsa ena mothologadi fa atswa kwa lapeng ka letsatsi la phitlho a ya go fitlha monna wagagwe o tshwanetse go tsamaya a ntse a akga matlape a mogaga... fa seke a ka dira jalo, batho ba tlile go welwa ke sefifi sa loso. (A bereaved person, on the day of the funeral, must walk while holding the mogaga leaves – if not, the household might be haunted by the darkness of death.)*

This ritual, which aims to avoid the lingering presence of death, symbolises an epistemology of spiritual continuity. Unlike Western logic on bereavement, this practice

implies a social contract between the living and the spiritual world, a relational ontology explored by Henson (2021):

*Bongaka jono jwa rona, temokerasi e re laetse gore re bo bitse boloi.* (Our traditional healing has been labelled as witchcraft by democracy.)

The 4 April 2025 broadcast provides perhaps the strongest critique of modernity and the post-apartheid state's role in epistemic erasure. The framing of democracy as an institution that devalues indigenous medical knowledge suggests that colonisation did not end – it merely evolved into new forms. This mirrors Asante's (1987) discussion on the colonality of being – how systems of governance continue to suppress African spiritual identity. Govenden's (2023) third decolonial function of the media is also exemplified here: the media must make colonised subjects visible without distortion. By naming the specific injustice (*bongaka* [traditional healing] = *boloi* [witchcraft]), the programme resists the narrative that African practices are uncivilised.

The episode on 28 March 2025 addresses the religious tensions that emerge when ancestral faith is positioned against Christianity:

*Batswana ba na ke tshwanelo ya go letlwa go obamela Modimo jaaka merafe e mengwe.* (Batswana have the right to worship God in their own way, just like other nations.)

*Re ne re na le mokgwa o re buang le Modimo wa rona ka ona... re bua le Modimo ka Badimo.* (We had our own ways of speaking to God – we did so through our ancestors.)

This is an essential intervention. The programme legitimises ancestral communication, challenging colonial Christian norms and reclaiming cosmological space as an act of religious freedom and ontological justice (Chiumbu & Motsaathebe, 2021).

Audience members may disagree, as observed in previous analysis, but this tension is useful: it reflects what Nyamnjoh (2019) refers to as the “unfinished business” of decolonisation. Decolonisation must include epistemic plurality, allowing for both ancestral and Christian spiritualities to co-exist.

Another layer of cultural protocol is revealed using proverbs as a mechanism of moral instruction and cultural explanation. In the Workers' Month episode (9 May 2025), the host invoked Setswana idioms such as:

*Letsema le epa le bona mong wa tshimo.* (A collective effort succeeds when the owner is present.)

*Mabogo dinku a thebana.* (Helping hands support one another.)

*Motho ga a iphetse.* (A person cannot survive alone.)

These sayings are not decorative. They function as indigenous theories of labour, reciprocity, and ethics. They mirror Afrocentric pedagogies that insist on learning through community (Manyozo, 2011). Airing after Easter, the show reclaims April for Batswana religious history and ancestral sovereignty.

## Communal identity and intergenerational knowledge transfer

This theme engages the use of radio as an archive of communal memory and a conduit for passing down cultural knowledge from elders to younger generations. The 4 April 2025 broadcast provides rich ethnographic evidence of how Motswedding FM's Kgolo programme functions not only as a cultural resource but also as a decolonial education platform. The programme mirrors what Manyozo (2011) describes as participatory communication, highlighting community-driven dialogue on rituals like *bogwera* and *bojale* (male and female initiation rituals), linking traditional practices to education and character development:

*Re bua ka go isa bana ba rona bogwera le bojale... se ke sekolo sa rona se re isang basimane le basetsana ba rona mo go sone go ba ruta mekgwa le melao ya Setswana. (We speak about taking our children through bogwera and bojale... these are our schools where we take our boys and girls to learn customs and Setswana laws.)*

In the above quote, traditional initiation is described as a school, positioning indigenous rites as parallel, if not superior, to formal education systems. This aligns with Chiumbu and Motsaathebe's (2021) view that indigenous radio should be viewed as a living archive – an epistemic structure that sustains cultural identity through time. The broadcast stressed the relevance of traditional practices and blames their neglect for the moral and cultural decline among the youth.

This reintroduces moral education through radio as a communal responsibility. Govenden's (2023) media decolonial theory finds strong resonance here. The programme meets cultural needs through parenting support, communal guidance, and mentorship restoration. It also fulfils the third principle – affirmation of the colonised subject – by presenting *bogwera*, *bojale*, and other rites not as superstition but as sophisticated pedagogical systems. The transmission of knowledge is not limited to structured rituals but occurs in everyday sayings. The 9 May 2025 episode included the following proverbs:

*Motho ke motho ka batho ba bangwe. (A person is a person because of others.)*

*Bana ba tladi ba anyela leratleng. (Children raised in noise adapt to chaos.)*

These are not simply idioms but epistemic formulations that condense worldview, ethics, and psychology into poetic form. Such language confirms what Asante (1987) describes as the African deep memory structure – where truths are remembered and reactivated through proverbs. Proverbs serve multiple functions: they teach, they correct, and they frame community consensus. The show's use of such language positions it as an oral curriculum for cultural preservation. The 23 May 2025 episode also highlighted the generational gap between elders and the youth, especially in attitudes toward culture, obedience, and roles:

*Ngwana ntae ke go lae, thogoputswa ga se molao. (Child, let me advise you – rejecting advice is not a virtue.)*

The programme encourages respectful intergenerational relationships, positioning elders as custodians of knowledge. This echoes Mpfu and Salawu's (2018) view that indigenous media restore disrupted wisdom hierarchies, using Setswana proverbs and rituals to create cultural learning spaces.

## Setswana epistemology and indigenous knowledge systems

This theme uncovers how the programme affirms Setswana as not just a language but a system of knowledge and cultural logic. The show uses rituals and beliefs as knowledge systems, performing epistemic disobedience by presenting untranslated Setswana worldviews, aligning with Govenden's (2023) media decolonial theory. The 4 April and 21 February 2025 episodes elaborated on the traditions, customs and ways of living that form the moral and spiritual architecture of the Setswana worldview:

*A re ikgotse dingwe tsa dikai tsa ditso tsa rona.* (Let us recall some examples of our customs.)

*Gompieno re tlile go bua ka dipheko, goya ka setso sa Setswana, gona le di diriswa tse dintsi thata tsa Setswana tsedika dirisiwang go phekola le go fodisa malwetsi a farologanyeng a batho baka iphitlhelang ba le mo go o ne ka nako tse dintsi. Mme gareng ga tse dingwe tse dika dirisiwang go phekola malwetsi a farologanyeng ke ditlhare, ke dijo, ke dilo tse di farologanyeng.* (Today we are going to talk about traditional healing remedies, according to Setswana culture. There are many traditional remedies used in Setswana to treat and heal various illnesses that people often encounter. Among the things used to treat these illnesses are medicinal plants, food, and other various elements.)

The programme highlights Setswana healing as essential, spiritual, symbolic, and communal – challenging Western mind dualism and affirming traditional rituals as vital for cultural survival. It reflects what Asante (1987) and Hountondji (1997) call African holistic epistemology. The programme repeatedly uses proverbs, not just for moral instruction, but to embed knowledge in metaphor. In the Workers' Month episode, the following was shared:

*Sedikwa ke ntšwa pedi ga se thata.* (A burden carried by two is not heavy.)

*Go fifing go tshwaranwa ka dikobo.* (In the dark, people share blankets.)

These sayings are epistemic capsules, condensing principles of interdependence, solidarity, and resilience. They function like what Nyamnjoh (2019) calls short codes of deep knowledge, passed across generations. Govenden's third principle – affirming the colonised subject without distortion – is evident here. The proverbs retain the original Setswana form and meaning, preserving indigenous logic while enabling broader understanding.

## Critique of postcolonial modernity and cultural alienation

The final theme highlights the programme's deep interrogation of modernity's alienating effects on Setswana tradition. This theme critiques modern institutions for displacing

indigenous beliefs and values. One of the most compelling, previously unused quotes comes from the 4 April 2025 episode, where the speaker reflects, is the following:

*Re na le tsela ya rona ya go ilela botsetsi — ga gona ope yo kileng a re ka re re mo temokerasi, botsetsi ga bo a tshwanela go ilelwa. Re na le mafelo a rona — a e leng mafelo a ngwao. Ka ntsha ya kgololosego ya rona eno, puso ya rona ya Aforika e beetse mafelo a re ikgantshang ka ona, mafelo a re dirang mo go one dingwao tsa rona, mafelo a re golaganyang le Badimo le Modimo. (We have our own way of mourning after childbirth – no one has ever said that because we live in a democracy, we should not mourn after childbirth. We have our own sacred spaces – cultural spaces. Due to this freedom we now have, our African government has designated spaces that we are proud of, spaces where we carry out our cultural rituals, places that connect us with our ancestors and with God).*

This quote highlights culture's partial state recognition but exposes tension between cultural autonomy and state-dependent visibility. It aligns with Govenden's (2023) argument that decolonial media must not only represent the colonised subject but also interrogate the systemic frameworks that mediate that representation. Another episode on 28 March 2025 concerns the perception of traditional knowledge in modern times:

*Kante nerentse re isa bana ba rona dikolong tsa Setswana, gontse gona le bogwera, gontse gona le bojale ka nako yateng. Go ne gontse gona le ditumelo tsere dumelang mogo tsone, ne gontse gona le di temalo tse eleng gore ra di diragatsa, gone gontse gona le ditso tse eleng gore ra di diragatsa. Mme dilo tse tsothe di ne di gatelela bogone jwa thuto jwa thuto ere rutiwang, gago reye gore thuto ene batla ka yone enele thuto ya ntsha ere lemogileng gotswa mogo bone, nerentse rena le mokgwa ore rutang bana barona ka o ne. (We had initiation and rituals that were linked with ancestral belief, and faith and traditions that we practised. All these were emphasising the depth of knowledge, the education, acknowledging that the first learning is realising what we already know, and the method by which our children were educated in Setswana. We had ways of speaking to our God, and so did our ancestors with faith – we spoke to God through our ancestors, telling them, praying, speaking our minds to God.)*

This statement demands spiritual spatial justice. The call to protect sacred places suggests that cultural alienation is not just about knowledge, but about land, memory, and cosmological belonging. As Chiumbu and Motsaathebe (2021) observe, decolonisation must include not only reclaiming languages and rituals but re-anchoring people to their places of meaning.

## DISCUSSION

The findings from the five analysed themes of the Ka Setswana segment collectively highlight the deep entanglement between indigenous knowledge, cultural reclamation, and media-based resistance. Each theme reveals how the Kgolo programme is not only producing culturally resonant content but is actively participating in the decolonisation of media in South Africa. These findings challenge simplistic conceptions of radio as mere edutainment and show instead that, when strategically used, indigenous language media can constitute a robust framework for epistemic justice.

The first theme's foregrounding of language as resistance demonstrates that Setswana is not only a tool of communication but a container of identity and sovereignty. The Valentine's Day episode confronts linguistic inferiority imposed by colonial discourse. Language, here, becomes political – a key terrain of struggle. This theme directly embodies Govenden's (2023) argument that decolonial media must make the colonised subject visible without distortion and ensure that their epistemologies are recognised in full complexity.

The second theme, which focuses on cultural protocols and rituals, shows how the programme engages in epistemic disobedience by reinstating ancestral knowledge in public discourse, especially mourning rituals, thus preserving cosmological practices often overshadowed by Western legal-religious systems. The critique of democracy as having labelled traditional healing as witchcraft articulates the coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007), where African identities are delegitimised by institutions of modern governance. Ka Setswana resists this by reframing indigenous knowledge systems as rational, sacred, and valid – not just in the past, but today.

The third theme – intergenerational knowledge transfer – illustrates how radio performs the role of a living cultural archive. The programme's positioning of initiations as *sekolo sa rona* (our school) reconceptualises indigenous rites of passage as parallel forms of education. Here, the show does not romanticise the past; instead, it updates it through radio storytelling. This theme fulfils Govenden's second principle of responsiveness by tailoring media to community needs – particularly the intergenerational transmission of memory in the face of cultural erosion.

In the fourth theme, the show affirms Setswana as an epistemological system, not merely a language. It centres traditional healing, proverbs, and ritual as ways of knowing – not inferior to Western science but alternative, holistic, and deeply contextual. This theme directly challenges what Mignolo (2009) describes as “epistemic disobedience” – the refusal to see colonial knowledge as universal. The refusal to sanitise, translate, or subordinate indigenous idioms aligns with Chiumbu and Motsaathebe's (2021) notion of radio as a “mediated archive” where subaltern knowledge systems are protected, circulated, and evolved.

The fifth theme – critique of modernity and cultural alienation – is arguably the most confrontational. This theme critically examines post-apartheid democracy, exposing how it often perpetuates colonial legacies by sidelining traditional healing, ancestral worship, and privileging English. Rather than rejecting democracy, the programme calls for one that embraces African ontologies. It aligns with Nyamnjoh's (2019) notion of “incompleteness”, affirming African cultural frameworks as evolving, resilient and open to critique, without losing their integrity.

Together, these themes demonstrate that Motsweding FM's Ka Setswana segment is far more than a cultural filler in the Friday schedule. It is an epistemic intervention. It counters the coloniality of power (through language), the coloniality of knowledge (through rituals and teaching), and the coloniality of being (through spiritual and social affirmation). Its use of radio – accessible, communal, and oral – is strategic, aligning

with Manyozo's (2011) idea of "people's media" that prioritises communal authorship of knowledge.

The programme is also noteworthy for its seasonal and strategic scheduling. Discussions around love and language are aired during Valentine's Day; labour and solidarity are explored during Workers' Month; and rituals are foregrounded around Easter – deliberately resisting Western temporal dominance and instead asserting African timelines and spiritual cycles. These editorial choices further support the theoretical framing of decolonial media as temporal, not just textual. As Govenden (2023) states, true decolonisation must rupture the timeframes, logics, and formats of colonial communication. Ka Setswana achieves this through the contextual, strategic, and ritual-based curation of topics that resonate with Batswana cosmology.

Listener interaction – although often indirect – forms another critical layer. The inclusion of WhatsApp voice notes and call-ins serves not only as feedback but as co-authorship. Audiences do not merely consume culture – they question, expand, and sometimes challenge it. The caller who questioned gendered mourning practices shows that Setswana radio is not static. It is a space of dynamic, dialogic, and even dissenting engagement. This flexibility makes Ka Setswana a model for decolonial cultural media – rooted in tradition, but open to re-interpretation.

## CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Motswedding FM's Ka Setswana segment on the Kgolo programme functions as a decolonial site of knowledge transmission, cultural affirmation, and epistemic justice. By prioritising the Setswana language and worldview, the programme reclaims the intellectual, spiritual, and social life of Batswana from marginalisation. Through themes of linguistic resistance, ritual preservation, communal learning and indigenous knowledge, and critiques of postcolonial modernity, the segment affirms that indigenous media can be both a tool of memory and a site of cultural innovation. Importantly, this study shows that decolonisation through media is not only about content, but also about structure, temporality, and participation. Ka Setswana models a framework where African knowledge is not romanticised but respected and problematised; not confined to heritage months but embedded in everyday radio time. As South Africa continues to confront the legacies of apartheid and linguistic hegemony, this programme offers a vitally important example of what culturally responsive, intellectually grounded, and politically committed indigenous media can look like.

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